



Lydgate, Chaucer, and Lady Margaret Beaufort

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ABSTRACT: In an early book on Lydgate, Derek Pearsall was dismissive of Lydgate's verse legend of Saint Margaret of Antioch. While perhaps of limited literary interest, the poem merits some claim to attention in its occurrence in the Devonshire Chaucer (New Haven, Yale Beinecke Library MS Takamiya 24). There it is paired with the *Canterbury Tales* in a context that has led to the suggestion that the manuscript might be the *Canterbury Tales* bequeathed by Lady Margaret Beaufort (1443–1509), Countess of Richmond and Derby, and mother of Henry VII, to her nephew of the half-blood, John St. John. This article refines the argument and offers an explanation for its early provenance in the Knyvett family. It explores the circumstances of the commissioning of Lydgate's poem, and the context in which it might have circulated singly and been selected for adding to a manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*, a context that reveals a network of family connections—Staffords, Hollands, Beauchamps, Beauforts, Knyvetts, and Bouchiers.

KEYWORDS: gentry/noble families, MS Takamiya 24, provenance history, *The Lyfe of Seynt Margarete*

Now Takamiya MS 24 in the Beinecke Library of Yale University, the so-called Devonshire Chaucer dates from the second half of the fifteenth century. It is finely written on vellum in one hand and decorated with illuminated borders,

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initials, and penwork.¹ Because of its fine production and the fact that it contains only Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (fols. 1r–274r) and Lydgate's *Lyfe of Seynt Margarete* (fols. 275r–282v), John M. Manly and Edith Rickert speculated that it might be the manuscript left in Lady Margaret Beaufort's will to John St. John: "Item a book of velom of Canterbury tales in English."² This essay will investigate the suggestion, moving forward to Lady Margaret from the Lydgate poem and its patron, "my lady Marche" (*Margarete*, line 69),³ and then investigating the manuscript's journey from Lady Margaret to later owners—always with the caveat that the Devonshire Chaucer may not have been the manuscript named in Lady Margaret's will.

The Poem

Although Derek Pearsall found much to admire (if not to love) in John Lydgate, he found it hard to muster enthusiasm for his religious poems. This "basic lack of interest in the form" (which he attributed to Lydgate's modern readers, and even to Lydgate himself) was particularly evident in *Margarete*: "everything comes out the same" and "the words are there, but behind the words only more words."⁴

It is hard not to endorse Derek's criticism. Lydgate's poem is faithful, arguably too faithful, to its source, the *Legenda aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine. Its length and the monotony of meter and tone, combined with subject matter which Derek found uncongenial, make it a poem easy to slumber over, despite the arresting details of Margaret's torture. Another work dependent on the *Legenda*, John Mirk's *Festial*, makes a better bid to interest its audience,

1. John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts*, 8 vols. (Chicago, 1940), 1:117–21 (hereafter cited as "Manly-Rickert"). For an online description with provenances, see Daniel W. Mosser, *A Digital Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Manuscripts and Incunables of the Canterbury Tales*, 2nd edn., online at: dwm27.net/Chaucer/. The manuscript is fully digitized, online at: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/16147032>.

2. Manly-Rickert, 1:621–22. For the will: *Collegium Divi Johannis Evangelistae 1511–1911* (Cambridge, UK, 1911), "The Will of the Foundress," 101–26, at 122/130 within bequests "To John Saynt John" at 122/128–30. I am grateful to Julia Boffey for alerting me to the connection with Lady Margaret, my interest in whom derives from research published as Susan Powell, ed., *Household Accounts of Lady Margaret Beaufort (1443–1509): From the Archives of St John's College Cambridge* (Oxford, 2022). References below to SJCA (St. John's College Archives) documents are to this edition and are identified by document/page. For Lady Margaret: Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, UK, 1992).

3. John Lydgate, *The Lyfe of Seynt Margarete*, in Sherry L. Reames, ed., *Middle English Legends of Women Saints* (Kalamazoo, 2003), 147–68 (cited in the text and following notes as "*Margarete*").

4. Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London, 1970), 276–77.

No one could accuse Lydgate of proceeding at a spanking pace, but he arguably shows more sensitivity than Mirk. In the case of Olibrius, he provides some context for his fierce reaction, when he has him speak lyrically of his planned marriage (or otherwise) to Margaret:

(*Margarete*, lines 134–36, 139–40)⁶

6. Although already in the *Legenda aurea*, this is reminiscent of Chaucer's description of Alisoun (*MilT*, I 3268–70); *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Boston, 1987). See Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols., (Princeton, 1993), 1:368–70, at 368.

Olibrius is assured that she is well born, he can see that she is beautiful, but he balks at her Christianity. A night in prison may make her rethink, and it is only after her refusal to budge, which he begs her to reconsider, that she is scourged. In fact, Olibrius is presented as a reluctant tormentor: he cannot bear to see her suffering—

The juge, confuse, sittying in the place,
 To beholde myght not sustene
 The rede blode rayle aboute hir face,

 Toke his mantel in his mortal tene,
 Hid his visage.

(*Margarete*, lines 267–69, 271–72)—

and in the end he beheads her largely for fear that she might convert more than the five thousand already converted. He considerably allows her to finish praying first, because this is what interests Lydgate—not the action, nor the drama, nor the prurience of the torture, but the words of the calm, confident, frigid Margaret. Others react to her: the revulsed onlookers who beg her to renounce Christianity rather than suffer; Olibrius who is at a loss what to do about her; and the devil who, once Margaret has bound him and set her foot on his neck, is forced to reveal his dastardly intentions in a remarkably anodyne speech. But, as for Margaret's words, they were, for Derek, "only more words, never any sense of reality."⁷

The Saint

While he may not have relished the legend of Saint Margaret, Derek Pearsall will have been interested in her adoption as a saint for women to invoke in childbirth. Lydgate invests this meaning in Margaret's prayer before martyrdom begins:

"And specyally to thee I beseche
 To alle wymmen whiche of childe travayle,
 For my sake, oo Lorde, be thou her leche;
 Lat my prayere unto hem availe."

(*Margarete*, lines 463–66)

7. Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 279.

The origin of this for Lydgate, as for Mirk and others, is the *Legenda aurea*: in Mirk's words, God granted "vche womman þat calleth to hyre in tra-
vayle of chylde þat scheo muste be deliuered sounde and þe chylde come to
crystyndom" (*Festial*, 1:184/103–4). The *Legenda* is normally dated to ca. 1260,
although the legend preexisted Jacobus de Voragine.⁸ That a virgin martyr
was invoked in childbirth might also have amused Pearsall since it may derive
from an association between childbirth and Margaret bursting from the dev-
il's belly. (This exorcism, Jacobus says, is not to be taken seriously; needless to
say, his followers took it seriously.⁹)

Anne Stafford, Countess of March (Table 1)

Given the association with childbirth, it seems plausible that Anne Stafford
(d. 1432), Countess of March, requested a poem on Saint Margaret because
she herself was facing childbirth, or perhaps on behalf of someone named
Margaret (who was perhaps facing childbirth). Lydgate gives no explanation
other than a devotion to the saint:

Remembre, O virgyne, upon that other side
On hir that caused, oonly for thi sake,
Thyn holy lyf me to compile and make,—
My Lady Marche I mene . . .
(*Margarete*, lines 66–69)

It is of course possible that no family connection need be found to explain
why Lydgate's poem should appear at the end of the Devonshire Chaucer.
However, an exploration of Anne Stafford's wider family circle provides a
context in which the poem might have circulated independently, perhaps as
an unbound booklet later copied into the manuscript. It also suggests a con-
nection with Lady Margaret Beaufort.

Anne Stafford's first marriage was to Edmund Mortimer (d. 1425), Earl of
March, by whom she had no children. By her second husband, John Holland
(d. 1447), Earl of Huntingdon, whom she married in 1427, she gave birth in
1430 to Henry Holland (d. 1475) and died two years later. John Holland was

8. For an exhaustive study, see Juliana Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon: The Cult of St Margaret of Antioch in Medieval England* (Oxford, 2016).

9. In both Mirk and Lydgate, only Margaret's head is swallowed, against the tradition of complete consumption.

cousin to Margaret Holland (d. 1439), who was the mother of John Beaufort (d. 1444), Duke of Somerset, father of Lady Margaret Beaufort.

If one wished to find a connection between *Margarete* and the Devonshire Chaucer, Margaret Holland is an interesting vector, in that (apart from the name Margaret and the family connection to the poem) something of her own and her family's interest in books is recorded. Her brother Thomas founded the Carthusian priory of Mount Grace (Yorkshire), ca. 1398; he was executed January 1400, but his widow, Joan Stafford, owned (perhaps commissioned) New Haven, Yale Beinecke Library Takamiya MS 8, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Christ*, written by Nicholas Love, prior of Mount Grace.¹⁰ Moreover, Margaret Holland's husband, John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset, commissioned an important manuscript, now extant in two parts: London, British Library MS Royal 2.A.xviii and Rennes, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 22.¹¹ At his death (1410) the manuscript was divided between the Beaufort and Holland families. The Holland part (Rennes) includes prayers perhaps written for Margaret Holland, on whose death in 1439 it passed to her cousin John Holland (d. 1447), mentioned above as the second husband of Anne Stafford of the Lydgate poem.

The Beaufort Hours (as the Royal manuscript is known) passed from Margaret Holland's husband, John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset, to his son, John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset; on his death in 1444, his widow, Margaret Beauchamp, incorporated their (smaller) part of the manuscript into a book of hours commissioned from the London artist William Abell. In time these Beaufort Hours came to her daughter, Lady Margaret Beaufort. Margaret Beauchamp's lifespan (1410–82) was such as to accommodate the possibility that she was the patron (or recipient) of the Devonshire Chaucer, and that this was the same as Lady Margaret's bequest to John St. John, the grandson of her mother's first husband, Oliver St. John.

It is perhaps a leap from Margaret Beauchamp's commission of her part of the original Beaufort manuscript to a posited commission of the

10. Michael G. Sargent, "The Holland-Takamiya Manuscript of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*," in Takami Matsuda, Richard A. Linenthal, and John Scahill, eds., *The Medieval Book and a Modern Collector: Essays in Honour of Toshiyuki Takamiya* (Cambridge, UK, 2004), 135–47.

11. For the following details, see Nicholas John Rogers, "Books of Hours Produced in the Low Countries for the English Market in the Fifteenth Century," M.Litt. thesis, University of Cambridge (Cambridge, UK, 1984), 84–88. I am grateful to Nicholas Rogers for this information, which revises Margaret Rickert, "The So-called Beaufort Hours and York Psalter," *Burlington Magazine* 104 (1962): 238–46. A detailed record and bibliography, with digitization of MS Royal 2.A.xviii, is available online at: <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=6543&CollID=16&NStart=20118>.

Devonshire Chaucer, but one finds here three generations of Margarets—Holland, Beauchamp, Beaufort—all of whom are likely to have known the Lydgate *Margarete* and one of whom might have been involved in its inclusion in a commission of the Devonshire Chaucer.¹²

The Devonshire Chaucer and Lady Margaret Beaufort

The Manly-Rickert suggestion that the Devonshire Chaucer and Lady Margaret's Chaucer, both vellum manuscripts, might be one and the same was based on "the elaborate expensiveness of the MS and . . . the inclusion at the end of a poem on St. Margaret, the patron saint of the Countess."¹³ The manuscript is of high-quality parchment, written in a single hybrid secretary hand, identified as scribe 2 in the group of hooked-g scribes; both items are similarly decorated.¹⁴ The occurrence of the Lydgate poem at the end is perhaps unusual if this were a presentation copy to Lady Margaret, or to another Margaret, although the dedication might have been a late decision.¹⁵ There are eight other witnesses to *Margarete* (NIMEV 439/DIMEV 720), two of which occur with the *Canterbury Tales*, neither with the poem as the single Lydgate item, as here.¹⁶ Of the others, *Margarete* occurs last and singly after *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost* and a prose life of Saint Dorothea in Cambridge, University Library MS Ll. 5.17; otherwise it is with more Lydgate verse and other material.¹⁷ Clearly, the context in the Devonshire Chaucer is unusual and highlights

12. Margaret Beauchamp's active involvement in the Beaufort Hours is stressed here, but among other books of hours associated with her mother and daughter, respectively, note the Clarence Hours (in private hands) and Alnwick, Alnwick Castle MS 482. See Joachim M. Plotzek, *Das Stundenbuch der Margaret Duchess of Clarence* (Cologne, 2004); and Janet Backhouse, "The Lady Margaret Beaufort Hours at Alnwick Castle," in John Mitchell, ed., with Matthew Moran, *England and the Continent in the Middle Ages: Studies in Memory of Andrew Martindale* (Stamford, 2000), 336–48.

13. Manly-Rickert, 1:621–22.

14. On the hooked-g scribes and their illuminators, see Linne R. Mooney and Daniel W. Mosser, "Hooked-g Scribes and Takamiya Manuscripts," in Takami Matsuda, Richard A. Linenthal, and John Scahill, eds., *The Medieval Book and a Modern Collector: Essays in Honour of Toshiyuki Takamiya* (Cambridge, UK, 2004), 179–96; Daniel W. Mosser and Linne R. Mooney, "The Case of the Hooked-g Scribe(s) and the Production of Middle English Literature, c. 1460–c. 1490," *Chaucer Review* 51 (2016): 131–50; and Holly James-Maddocks, "The Illuminators of the Hooked-g Scribe(s) and the Production of Middle English Literature, c. 1460–c. 1490," *Chaucer Review* 51 (2016): 151–86.

15. It begins opposite the blank verso after CT and ends in an added bifolium.

16. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 686; and Manchester, Chetham's Library MS Mun. A.4.104. See Daniel W. Mosser, "When Is a 'Canterbury Tales Manuscript' Not Just a *Canterbury Tales* Manuscript?," in Margaret Connolly, Holly James-Maddocks, and Derek Pearsall, eds., *Scribal Cultures in Late Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Linne R. Mooney* (Woodbridge, 2022), 285–311, at 303 (no. 122).

17. In Durham, University Library MS Cosin V.2.14, *Margarete* is last and *Siege of Thebes* is first, as two of five items.

Margarete as a stand-alone item unconnected to the single major work, the *Canterbury Tales*, but nevertheless an integral part of the manuscript in terms of hand, decoration, and running heads.

The name bestowed at baptism held significance for that child throughout life. Lady Margaret's mother was a Margaret, as was her paternal grandmother, and she stood godmother to several Margarets, such as Margaret Windsor (whom she sponsored as a Birgittine of Syon Abbey) and the otherwise unknown Margaret Blythe. As already noted, the name was intrinsically connected to the saint, Margaret of Antioch, the patron of women in childbirth, a saint perhaps of particular importance to Margaret Beauchamp, who gave birth to nine children over three marriages, and also to Lady Margaret Beaufort, whose own childbearing at the age of thirteen may have been difficult:¹⁸ certainly, she was never to give birth again. Tapers were burnt biennially at Lady Margaret's cost at St. Margaret's, Ketsby (Lincolnshire), which was the focus of Margaret devotion:¹⁹ the saint was embroidered on an altar cloth in her chapel, and her image was one of several postmortem gifts to St. John's College.²⁰

The Commission (Tables 1–2)

The poem *Margarete* will therefore have been deliberately chosen as the single item added to the *Canterbury Tales* in the Devonshire Chaucer. Nothing is known of its commissioning, but Manly-Rickert proposed an occasion:

The date suggested by the writing, illumination, and general style of the MS would fit the date of the marriage of the Lady Margaret with the Earl of Richmond (ca. 1455), and suggests that it might have been a wedding present; she was a great lover of books.²¹

This is an attractive proposition. A 1450 marriage between the infant Margaret (born May 31, 1443) and John de la Pole, son of her guardian William, Earl of Suffolk, was dissolved and the wardship and marriage given in 1453 to Jasper and Edmund Tudor, Henry VI's half-brothers. She was married to Edmund in 1455, after which the couple traveled to west Wales, where the brothers were regional lieutenants. In August 1456, Edmund was captured by Yorkists while defending Carmarthen Castle; he died there in November and was buried at

18. Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 39–40.

19. Cambridge, SJCA, D91.20/79, 120; D91.21/9, 111; D91.19/13, 97.

20. Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 177.

21. Manly-Rickert, 1:622.

the Franciscan friary. His thirteen-year-old wife gave birth January 28, 1457 to their son, the future Henry VII, at Pembroke Castle, the stronghold of Jasper Tudor.

In these fraught circumstances, one fears for the fate of the manuscript (although, if a Margaret Beauchamp commission, it was likely retained at Bletsoe, where the couple were married), and one must also query whether in 1455 the child Margaret was “a great lover of books.” She was little older at the time of her next marriage (January 3, 1458), to Henry Stafford (d. 1471), but that marriage raises the possibility that the Staffords might be considered as commissioners of the manuscript. Henry Stafford’s parents were Humphrey (d. 1460), first Duke of Buckingham, and Anne Neville. Anne Neville is known to have left Lady Margaret books (not a Chaucer) in her 1480 will, by which time Lady Margaret was certainly “a great lover of books.”²² In fact, Anne Neville’s will records no bequests of books other than to Lady Margaret:

Also I wolle that my doughter Richmond haue a boke of English of
Legenda Sanctorum a boke of Frensh called Lukan another boke of
Frensh of the pistell and gospels and a prymmer with claspes of
siluer and gilt couered with purpull veluett.²³

Moreover, the Lydgate poem’s patron, Anne Stafford, was from 1424 sister-in-law to Anne Neville and so aunt to Henry Stafford. Her son Henry Holland (d. 1475) was his cousin, as was John Beaufort, Lady Margaret’s father.

Finally, there is the possibility that Lady Margaret commissioned the manuscript herself. Purchases of printed books, but not manuscripts, are recorded in her household accounts (which date only from 1498, when she was fifty-five). For example, in 1508, she bought a *Canterbury Tales* from Wynkyn de Worde for 2s. 8d.²⁴ It merits consideration whether vellum manuscripts of Lydgate’s *Sege of Troy* and Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, bequeathed respectively to her son the King and her great-niece Alice St. John, wife of Henry Parker (see below), might be linked with the commission of the Devonshire Chaucer.²⁵ My own inclination, for the Devonshire Chaucer at least, is towards a commission by her mother, Margaret Beauchamp, part

22. A. S. G. Edwards and Carol M. Meale, “The Marketing of Printed Books in Late Medieval England,” *The Library*, ser. 6, 15 (1993): 95–124; and Susan Powell, *The Birgittines of Syon Abbey: Preaching and Print* (Turnhout, 2017), 151–213 (revised from “Lady Margaret Beaufort and Her Books,” *The Library*, ser. 6, 20 (1998): 197–240).

23. Kew, TNA, PROB 11/7/7.

24. Cambridge, SJCA, D91.19/70.

25. The descriptions in “The Will of the Foundress,” 121/121–22, 121/128, suggest manuscripts similar to the Chaucer bequest: “Item a book of velom of Canterbury tales in English” (122/130);

of the nexus of Stafford/Holland/Beauchamp/Beaufort connections within which fine books were commissioned and the Lydgate poem likely circulated.

The Bequest (Table 2)

As noted above, the recipient of Lady Margaret's Chaucer was John St. John. He is not to be confused (as Manly-Rickert confuse him) with her chamberlain of the same name, to whom she also left a bequest: "Item to Ser John Saynt John oure Chamberlayn."²⁶ Of the John St. Johns in Lady Margaret's family, the legatee of her Chaucer manuscript was the one called in her accounts "Master John St John" to distinguish him from his cousins of various generations, the Sir John St. Johns. The St. Johns were the offspring of Sir Oliver St. John (I) (d. 1437), first husband of Lady Margaret's mother, Margaret Beauchamp. They were therefore Lady Margaret's siblings of the half-blood, and several of them and their offspring served in her household. Oliver's sons, John (I) (d. 1488) of Bletsoe (Bedfordshire) and Oliver (II) (d. 1497) of Lydiard Tregoze (Wiltshire) had sons, respectively, (Sir) John St. John (II) (d. 1525) and (Master) John St. John (d. 1512).

In their discussion of a list of books in a fifteenth-century Lydgate manuscript, Oxford, Balliol College MS 329, fol. 172r, likely owned by the St. Johns and associated with Bedfordshire, Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards note Manly-Rickert's cautious identification of the Devonshire Chaucer with Lady Margaret's Chaucer, and suggest that "The tales of Caunterburye" in the list "can presumably be connected" with Lady Margaret's Chaucer.²⁷ They observe that the names John and Oliver St. John occur in the manuscript (fols. 20r, 166v). There is also a jotting unnoticed by them, "John Seynt John was here thi[s] / daye and Mr Parkar was at Bedf[ord]" (fol. 173v), which is in a different hand again.²⁸ Henry Parker (d. 1556) was married to Alice, sister of Sir John St. John (III) (d. 1558), and the two men were close.²⁹ Lady Margaret was

"Item a great volume of velom of the siege of Troye yn English"; "Item a book of velomm of Gowere in English." See Powell, *The Birgittines*, 159–60, 213.

26. "The Will of the Foundress," 123/134–35.

27. They also owned a *Siege of Troy*. See Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, "Books Connected with Henry Parker, Lord Morley, and His Family," in Marie Axton and James P. Carley, eds., *"Triumphs of English": Henry Parker, Lord Morley, Translator to the Tudor Court: New Essays in Interpretation* (London, 2000), 69–85, at 69–70. The digitized manuscript and description are available online at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/baliolarchivist/albums/72157634180044064>.

28. Neither John matches the hand of John (II), who, as an executor of Lady Margaret's will, signed the foundation charter (Cambridge, SJCA, D4.17; April 4, 1509) of St. John's College, Cambridge.

29. Like his father, John (III) was chamberlain, in his case to Princess Elizabeth. His wife was Margaret Waldegrave, commemorated in the Ellesmere Chaucer as "Margery seynt Joh[n] ys A shrew" (private communication, Ralph Hanna). See Mosser, *A Digital Catalogue*. Parker, by then

fond of Alice St. John and her husband,³⁰ and, as noted above, she bequeathed Alice a vellum Gower manuscript. Attractive as it might be to posit Master John, to whom the *Canterbury Tales* was bequeathed, as sufficiently familiar with the Bletsoe library to write in one of the books, the associations with Bedfordshire and Parker, and the mid-sixteenth-century date of the hands, suggest that the Johns and the Oliver are of Bletsoe.

Master John St. John

As Lady Margaret favored Alice St. John of Bletsoe and her husband, so too did she favor Master John St. John of Lydiard Tregoze and his wife. Although he was not officially her ward, she took responsibility for his lands when he was still a minor at his father's death, receiving the income but also protecting the property from her son. In a deposition of March 19, 1512, John gave his age as thirty-four "and more" and testified that he had been a member of her household in 1503–05, when she had made a settlement of property on St. John's College, Cambridge, "and so contynued with her in service many yeres unto the tyme of her decesse."³¹ The accounts record transactions relating to the "St John lands" until at least 1505.³² Lady Margaret was present at John's marriage to Joan Ewerby in June 1498, and paid for bread, ale, and wine.³³ The accounts of 1498 and later refer to gifts, such as fur for a gown in 1501 when Lady Margaret's Coldharbour residence was preparing to receive Katherine of Aragon.³⁴ In 1501 and 1502, she supported the couple by an exhibition worth £33 6s. 4d.,³⁵ and, in 1504–05, made payments for a midwife and nurse.³⁶ They then stayed with her, at her expense, through September to November.³⁷ In 1508, she paid 20s. for a gown for their daughter.³⁸ In her will, John received several items of household furniture, as well as the *Canterbury Tales* manuscript.³⁹

Lord Morley (see note 27 above), was supervisor of his will: Nicholas Harris Nicolas, *Testamenta Vetusta*, 2 vols. (London, 1826), 2:612. See also S. T. Bindoff, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509–1558*, 3 vols. (London, 1982), 3:255–57, at 256.

30. Powell, ed., *Household Accounts*, passim.

31. For the deposition, see Cambridge, SJCA, D4.10, letters patent of Henry VIII, Westminster, January 24, 1513 ("in service . . . decesse" written over scraped text). I am grateful to Lynsey Darby, archivist of St. John's College, for photographs and transcriptions.

32. Cambridge, SJCA D102.10/55, 176–7, 179–80; D91.21/75.

33. Cambridge, SJCA D91.17/19–20.

34. Cambridge, SJCA D102.2/28.

35. Cambridge, SJCA D91.20/64. For later exhibitions, see D91.20/194; D91.21/77.

36. Cambridge, SJCA D91.20/161, 170; D91.21/41.

37. Cambridge, SJCA D91.21/49–50, 56.

38. Cambridge, SJCA D91.19/81, 116.

39. Sir John St. John received a single item, a standing cup.

After Lady Margaret's death on June 29, 1509, Master John entered Henry VIII's service. He died September 1, 1512, at Fuenterabbía, Spain. There is no will; his widow remarried and did not die until September 5, 1553. The manuscript may have remained at Bletsoe throughout its early existence.

After John St. John (Tables 1–3)

If Master John St. John was the first recipient of Lady Margaret's Chaucer, the earliest provenance in the Devonshire Chaucer relates to the names "Knyvet" (written below a shield sketched at the top of fol. 274v) and "Walpole" (above and below another shield in the same sixteenth-century hand at the bottom of the folio).⁴⁰ Manly-Rickert identified the shield as containing the arms of Sir Edmund Knyvett (d. 1539, *pace* Manly-Rickert) and his wife Jane Bouchier, and noted that their daughter Katherine married John Walpole, sergeant-at-law.⁴¹ They suggested that the Devonshire Chaucer came into the Knyvett family through John Bouchier (d. 1533), second Lord Berners, the noted translator and bibliophile, who was Jane Bouchier's father and John St. John's "cousin."⁴² The relationship ("cousin" is a generation out) was the result of the first marriage of Lionel Welles, Margaret Beauchamp's third husband, to Joan Waterton. Their grandson Robert, Lord Welles and Willoughby (executed with his father 1470), married Elizabeth Bouchier, whose nephew was the second Lord Berners. The John St. Johns were grandsons of Margaret Beauchamp herself by her first husband, Oliver St. John. Despite the attraction of finding a connection with the bibliophilic Berners, the relationship is too attenuated to accept any direct transaction from the St. Johns to the Bouchiers, although it is interesting that Anne Stafford of the Lydgate poem was half-sister of John Bouchier (d. 1474), first Lord Berners, grandfather of the second baron. There is no evidence that the manuscript was ever in Berners's library, since (although two separate inventories were made of his goods in 1533–34) no titles are given of the eighty books in his study, nor any details of legatees.⁴³

A more immediate route by which John St. John's Chaucer might have reached the Knyvetts (if the manuscripts are the same) is through Sir William

40. These names occur on the blank verso before *Margarete*; a further shield and the name "Skarlet" (Katherine's second husband) occur on the final page of the poem. For the manuscript's later history, see Manly-Rickert, 1:120–21.

41. Manly-Rickert, 1:120–21. Knyvett is in the first, and Bouchier in the fourth quarter, suggesting a descendant, not Sir Edmund himself (private communication, Adrian Ailes).

42. Manly-Rickert, 1:622; and James P. Carley, "John Bouchier, second Baron Berners (c.1467–1533)," in *ODNB*. I am grateful to Christian Steer for analysis of the relationship.

43. Joyce Boro, "Lord Berners and His Books: A New Survey," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 67 (2004): 236–49, at 247–48.

Knyvett, grandfather of Sir Edmund.⁴⁴ Sir William (d. 1515) was an influential Norfolk landowner who had been in the service of Henry Stafford (d. 1483), second Duke of Buckingham, nephew to Lady Margaret's second husband Henry Stafford. Knyvett's second marriage, ca. 1477, had been to Joan Stafford (d. 1485), Henry Stafford's sister. He was therefore kin to Lady Margaret (although her Stafford husband had died in 1471). The second Duke was attainted and executed in the Buckingham rebellion of 1483, and, although the attainiture was reversed by Henry VII in 1485, most Buckingham lands came to Lady Margaret, together with the wardship of his sons, the third Duke Edward (executed 1521) and his brother Henry (d. 1523). By 1501–02, Knyvett was steward of her household, where he must have been well known to the St. Johns. He and Master St. John were both feoffees in the important deed noted above,⁴⁵ and Sir William's grandson Thomas, brother of the Sir Edmund who married Jane Bouchier, died in the same campaign and year as Master John St. John.⁴⁶ After Lady Margaret's death, Knyvett became chamberlain and councilor to the third Duke of Buckingham.⁴⁷ He was therefore an integral part of the Stafford and Beaufort households, and, given that nothing is known of the manuscript between its bequest to Master John St John and its appearance in the Knyvett household, Sir William might be an earlier (though still undocumented) route to the Knyvett coat of arms than Manly-Rickert's suggested Bouchier.⁴⁸

Conclusion

So intricate are the relationships of late medieval gentry that a simple stemma of (even hypothetical) provenance is impossible. In the many ramifications of the Stafford/Holland/ Beauchamp/Beaufort (and now Knyvett/Bouchier) nexus, this essay has explored several research questions: how and why Anne Stafford commissioned Lydgate's poem; whether it passed through family

44. Sir Edmund died in 1539. He was sergeant-porter to Henry VIII and is not to be confused with either his nephew (d. 1551) or his father (d. 1504) of the same name; see Stanford Lehmberg, "Sir Edmund Knyvet (c.1508–1551)," in *ODNB*, which includes "Sir Edmund Knyvet (d. 1539)."

45. Cambridge, SJCA, D4.10. See note 30 above.

46. S. J. Gunn, "Sir Thomas Knyvet (c.1485–1512)," in *ODNB*.

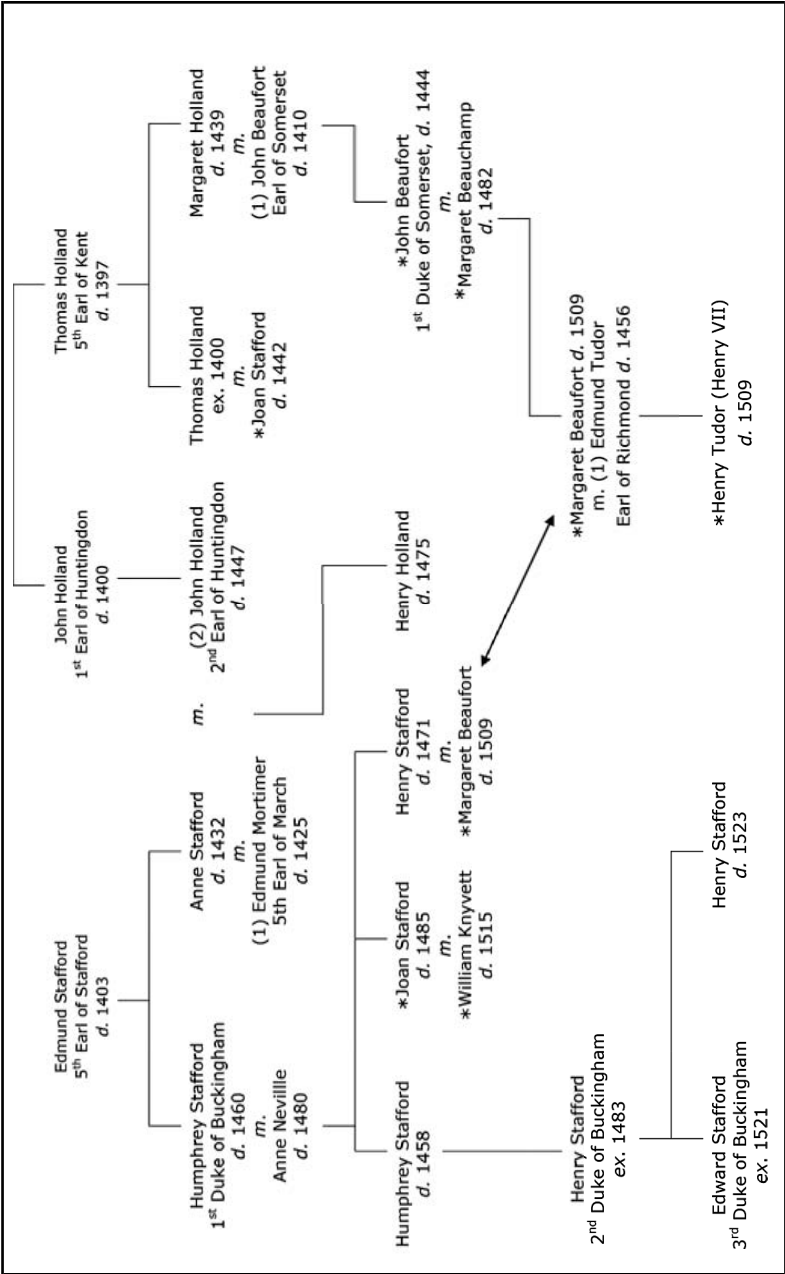
47. Jones and Underwood, *The King's Mother*, 277; Carole Rawcliffe, *The Staffords: Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham, 1394–1521* (Cambridge, UK, 1978), 227, and 22–23 (Table III). On a royal visit to Knyvett's manor, see Susan Powell, "Lady Margaret Beaufort: A Progress Through Essex and East Anglia, 1498," in C. M. Woolgar, ed., *The Elite Household in England, 1100–1550: Proceedings of the 2016 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donington, 2018), 295–316.

48. It might have passed through the library of Sir Thomas Knyvett (d. 1618), grandson of Sir Edmund and Jane, since David McKitterick, *The Library of Sir Thomas Knyvett of Ashwellthorpe* (Cambridge, UK, 1978), errs in suggesting that it descended through the Buckenham branch of the family (44n84).

circles, and, if so, amongst whom; when the Devonshire Chaucer was commissioned, by whom, and why the Lydgate poem was appended to it; how the manuscript (if the same manuscript) came to Lady Margaret Beaufort, and why it was left by her to Master John St. John. The context has been explored and suggestions made, specifically that Lady Margaret's Chaucer was the Devonshire Chaucer and can perhaps be associated with her mother, Margaret Beauchamp. As to how it came from the St. Johns of Lydiard Tregoze to the Knyvetts, an alternative hypothesis to that of Manly-Rickert foregrounds the importance of Sir William Knyvett in both Stafford and Beaufort households, thereby linking Anne Stafford and her commission of *Margarete*, Lady Margaret Beaufort, and her *Canterbury Tales* manuscript, and the Knyvetts, early owners of the Devonshire Chaucer.

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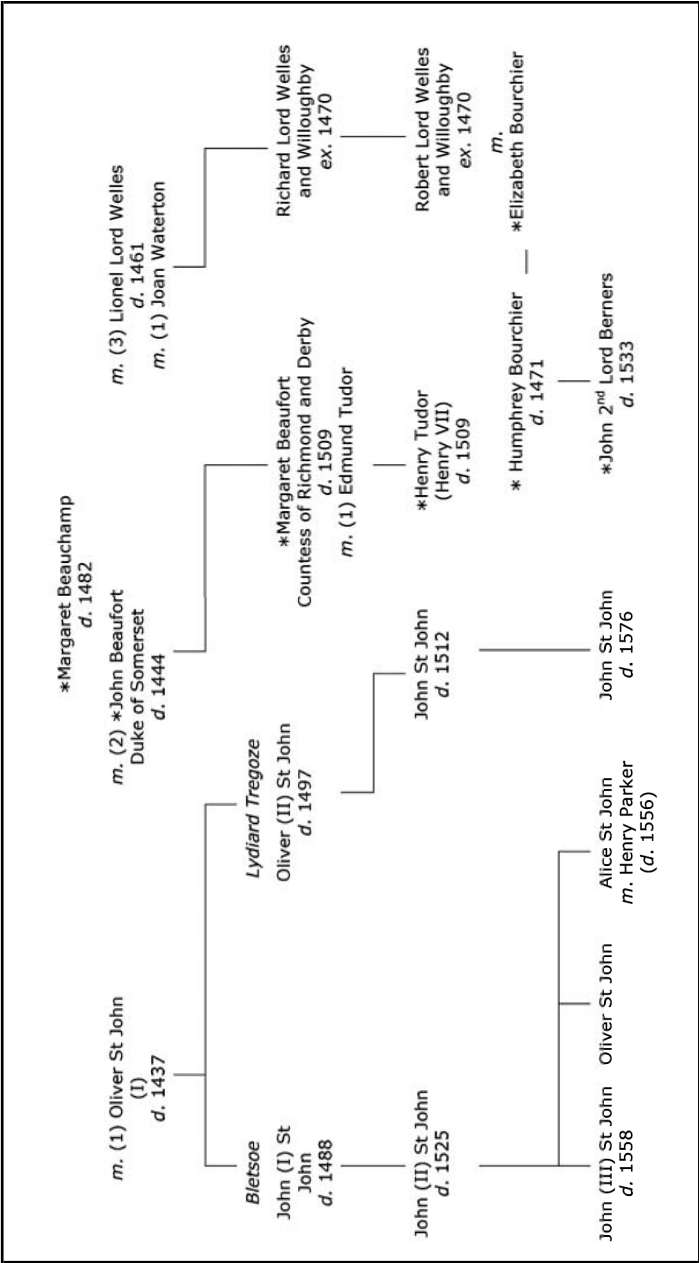
TABLE 1 Stafford and Holland



Notes:

1. An asterisk indicates that the person also features on another genealogical table.
 2. Only those mentioned in the accompanying essay are shown in the tables, with the result that many siblings and other kin are excluded.
- I am indebted to Meg Twycross for preparing these tables from my hand drafts.

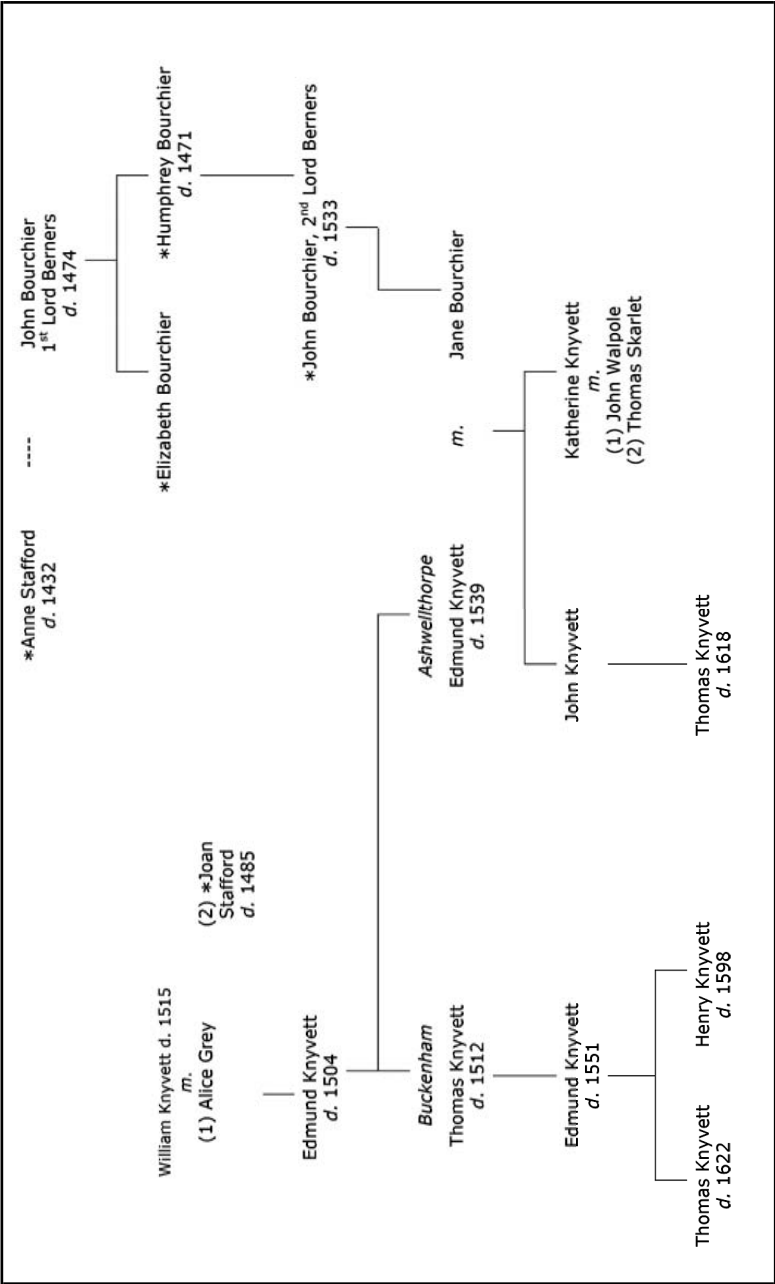
TABLE 2 Beauchamp, St John, Beaufort and Welles



Notes:

1. An asterisk indicates that the person also features on another genealogical table.
2. Only those mentioned in the accompanying essay are shown in the tables, with the result that many siblings and other kin are excluded.

TABLE 3 Knyvett and Bourchier



Notes:

1. An asterisk indicates that the person also features on another genealogical table.
2. Only those mentioned in the accompanying essay are shown in the tables, with the result that many siblings and other kin are excluded.